

**Amendment 2757 — to require all reports authorized in this bill be publicized and accessible to the public once completed**

- **Each Appropriation Bill Requires Dozens of Reports**
- **Reports Authorized in This Bill Often Are Exclusively for Senators on the Appropriations Committee**
- **Publicizing Reports Will Allow Americans to See How Their Money is Being Spent**
- **Publicizing Reports Will Allow All Members of Congress to Conduct Better Oversight of Agencies**

This amendment simply requires that all reports required to be submitted by a federal agency within this act be posted on the public Website of that agency for all Americans and Members of Congress to see. The only exception to this is for reports that contain classified or proprietary information.

This amendment was unanimously adopted as an amendment to the Energy and Water Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2010 (H.R. 3183), the Transportation and Housing and Urban Development Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2010 (H.R. 3288), the Interior Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2010 (H.R. 2996), and the Defense Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2010 (H.R. 3326). By passing this amendment to the Military-Construction appropriations bill (H.R. 3082), Congress will increase transparency of the both the legislative and administrative process and give Americans the opportunity to be more involved in holding their elected officials accountable.

### **Each Appropriation Bill Requires Dozens of Reports**

Typically, in each appropriations bill, dozens of studies, reports, and reviews are funded for a variety of reasons.

Many of these reports are instances of Congress exercising their Constitutional responsibility of oversight to ensure that certain agencies or federal programs are operating effectively and efficiently.

Other reports are to ascertain how federal funding should be appropriated in the future or to justify the creation of a new federal program.

H.R. 3082 requires numerous reports in both the Senate and House version of this bill, including:

- A report on what actions DOD and the State Department have taken to encourage host countries to assume a greater share of the common defense burden;
- An annual report on all operation and maintenance expenditures for each individual general or flag officer quarters for the prior year;
- A report by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on any approved major construction project for which funds are not obligated within the time frames mandated by this act;
- A report on any lease of property estimated to have greater than \$1 million in annual rental costs;
- A report detailing the current and planned use of Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy in Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities, including the number of veterans being treated with this therapy, the types of conditions being treated, and their respective success rates (report to all of Congress);
- A detailed report on how the \$3 billion appropriated for Information Technology projects for the Veterans administration is spent, including operations and maintenance costs, salaries, and expenses by individual project; and
- A quarterly report on the financial status of the Veterans Health Administration.

## **Reports Authorized in This Bill Often Are Exclusively for Senators on the Appropriations Committee**

Unfortunately, because Members of the Appropriations committees in the House and the Senate write these bills, these reports are often only written for appropriators.

For instance, on page 51 in the House version of H.R. 3082, line 18, the following is written:

“Sec. 220. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress a quarterly report on the financial status of the Veterans Health Administration.”

This means that the vast majority of Congress (88 percent of the House of Representatives and 70 percent of the Senate) cannot review these reports before making decisions on what federal programs they would like to prioritize or where federal legislation is necessary.

Additionally, the American public is effectively barred from viewing these documents and contributing their expertise and oversight capabilities.

## **Publicizing Reports Will Allow Americans to See How Their Money is Being Spent**

By requiring that the federal agencies producing the reports funded in this bill publicize them on their public Website, all Americans with access to the internet will be able to read and evaluate these reports.

In today's information age, observations made by bloggers, government accountability group, students, and others can help inform the public of needs or problems within our government and society.

Empowering millions of Americans to check up on their government by viewing these reports online, will also further encourage agencies to be accountable to Congress and the people of the United States of America.

**Publicizing Reports Will Allow All Members of Congress to Conduct Better Oversight of Agencies**

By requiring that the federal agencies producing the reports funded in this bill publicize them on their public Website, all Members of Congress and their staff will be ensured of easy access to these reports.

Evaluating and reading these reports may prompt a Congressional hearing, federal legislation, or even a termination of a federal program or policy.

These reports may also be helpful in setting fiscal priorities by exposing Members of Congress to performance results of programs and studies on issues within federal agencies.